

10. CASPIAN PLOVER *CHARADRIUS ASIATICUS* PALLAS AT PT. CALIMERE, TAMIL NADU

The Caspian plover *Charadrius asiaticus* has apparently only been recorded once within India's boundaries, a specimen having been collected near Ratnagiri, Maharashtra in 1880. There is one sight record from the Andaman Islands (SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, Ripley, S.D. 1982), which is now considered as a separate species, the Oriental plover *Charadrius veredus*.

On 18 February 1991 at about 1630 hrs K.J.K. sighted a Caspian plover in partial breeding plumage on the beach at the southern boundary of Pt. Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu. Initially it was seen near the water's edge but soon moved to the adjoining area of dry sand, dotted with patches of dry grass. There it continued feeding for approximately half an hour in the company of two lesser sand plovers *Charadrius mongolus* and several Kentish plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* which enabled useful comparisons to be made. The bird was seen again briefly at 1745 hrs on the grassland further inland, where it was loosely associated with some Pacific golden plovers *Pluvialis dominica fulva*.

K.J.K. informed S.B. and L.R. and the following morning they together relocated the bird, near where it had last been seen, and confirmed its identity. It was observed with a telescope at fairly close range for a period of 20 minutes while feeding with Pacific golden plovers and little ringed plovers *Charadrius dubius*.

The following field characters were noted: The overall size appeared somewhat larger than that of lesser sand plover, perhaps due to the considerably

longer legs, which were of a pale green colour. The upper parts were a uniform brown, concolorous with the rump and tail, which had no obvious white areas, although there may have been some white edging to the latter. The 'face' was very pale with white forehead, throat and lores being joined to a distinct broad white supercilium that curved back behind the eye, the lores and forehead having a slight chestnut buffy wash, which was also visible on the brown of the hind-neck. The thick brown eye-stripe extended back behind the eye to join the brown of the upper parts. The bill was noticeably different to that of lesser sand plover, being likewise black but tapered to a finer point. The most distinctive feature was the broad, pale chestnut band, a dark brown line and at close range showed some white scaling. Belly and undertail coverts were white. The bird was observed to have a white wing-bar, which together with its white axillaries and wing-lining separate it from the very similar Oriental plover.

HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983) does not record its behaviour in India. Our bird appeared to have a fairly typical plover-type feeding pattern with its rather upright stance resembling that of the Pacific golden plover.

This is an interesting sighting of a species that has not been recorded on the Indian mainland for over 100 years.

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S. BALACHANDRAN
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May 6, 1991

11. UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR OR ADAPTATION AGAINST PREDATION IN TEREK SANDPIPER *TRINGA TEREK* (LATHAM)

On the morning of 2 April 1991 we observed a scattered flock of Terek sandpiper *Tringa terek* (Latham) (return migration flock) numbering 32, feeding in the reservoirs in the Great Vedaranyam Swamp at Pt. Calimere, Tamil Nadu. Five were caught by the trappers of the Bombay Natural History Society for ringing as part of the ongoing Bird Migration Project. The first two Terek sandpipers grouped together after release. The third was released along the water's edge. Suddenly a brahminy kite

Haliastur indus stooped to catch it. But to our astonishment the sandpiper immediately dived into the water, surfaced about 60 cm away and swam for few seconds. Once again the brahminy kite tried to prey upon it, but the bird dived again into the water and came out about 1.54 m away and swam for another 1.25 m to reach the bank. In the meantime we got into the water and chased the brahminy kite away, which gave time for the sandpiper to hide itself under nearby *Suaeda* bush.

The swimming behaviour of terek sandpiper has been recorded (BIRDS OF THE WESTERN PALEARCTIC, Cramp and Simmons, K.E.L. 1983). But diving into water is an unusual behaviour not known to be recorded, which may be either an adaptation to es-

cape from predators or may be an impulsive action resulting from panic.

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V. NATARAJAN

May 8, 1991

12. UNUSUAL FORAGING SITE OF GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER *DINOPIUM BENGHALENSE* (LINN.)

11 April 1991, at 0830 hrs while walking along the road near one of my study sites at Pt. Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu, I saw a goldenbacked woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense* flying from the forest towards the swamp. I was puzzled to see a woodpecker flying towards the swamp, which was not its habitat, but it immediately perched on one of the concrete electric poles along the road. After landing on the lower part of the pole, it started creeping up in short spurts, inspecting and picking up some prey from the crevices. It picked prey from three crevices on the pole and once from the gap between

the iron clamps at the top of the pole. Afterwards it flew to another pole, repeated similar foraging tactics at two crevices and flew towards the forest. Inspection of some crevices on these poles revealed the presence of beetles, ants, cockroaches and spiders.

According to Ali and Ripley (1983, HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN), the woodpeckers pick up insects from tree trunks, boughs and the ground. This observation reports an unusual foraging site of the goldenbacked woodpecker.

June 10, 1991

S. ALAGAR RAJAN

13. A SILENT ASSOCIATION

On 12 January 1991 near Kakachi I happened to come across a small troop of liontailed Macaques *Macaca silenus* in the dense evergreen forest. The monkeys were seen probing the flowers of *Cullenia exarillata* and brought down a rain of flowers, twigs, bark and some insects. A little below the monkeys, I noticed a racket-tailed drongo *Dicrurus remifer* silently foraging under the 'rain'. The monkeys moved to another tree and were soon followed by the drongo. Such an association I have seen almost at all

seasons at Kakachi.

The HANDBOOK OF BIRDS (Ali and Ripley, S.D. 1983) mentions the drongo associating closely with treepies and woodpeckers but monkeys are not mentioned. Elsewhere, however, birds have been seen associating with monkeys (Bonski and Scott, *Biotropica* 20(2): 136-143, 1988).

March 13, 1991

T. GANESH

14. TREE PIE *DENDROCITTA VAGABUNDA* (LATHAM) FEEDING ON ARIL OF SEEDS OF *PITHECELLOBIUM DULCE*

On 26 April 1991, at Bundha Forest Nursery of Jamwa Ramgarh Range (Division Jaipur-West), I noticed a party of 13 individuals of the tree pie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* (Latham) feeding on arils of seeds of *Pithecellobium dulce* along with redvented bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*, roseringed parakeet *Psittacula krameri* and other frugivorous birds. Some individual of treepie were picking up fallen green pods of *Pithecellobium dulce* from the ground while others were plucking them off the trees. Holding the pods in

their claws, they were tearing the pods with their bills and devouring the arils, an outgrowth present on seeds.

The forest of the locality has a dry-deciduous type of vegetation and *Pithecellobium dulce* is an exotic component of these forests introduced by the Forest Department, a few local nurseries and plantations.

July 21, 1991

SATISH KUMAR SHARMA